

XV: JUSTIFICATION

THESIS: (1) **Dio Trino abita in noi* per condurre la nostra vita con noi, che siamo aiutati dalla grazia (creata) che è una **partecipazione cristiforme* alla vita divina, data per seguire Cristo (gratia elevans) e per superare le debolezze della nature caduta (gratia sanans)...[*Inhabitation and *Participation in Christ's grace]

(2) Nella forza della grazia *preveniente e cooperante* l'adulto deve prepararsi a ricevere questa *partecipazione* soprattutto, ma non unicamente, con la fede, oppure accoglierla quando l'ha ricevuta da *bambino*....[Canons 5 & 6 of Trent: Related question of infants, Faith as personal and intellectual act]

(3) Con questa partecipazione (grazia) Dio ci dà per *merito* di Cristo la *remissione dei peccati* e il *rinnovamento dell'uomo interiore* nella *sanctificazione* e la *figliolanza con la fede, la speranza e la carità*....[Canons 7-9 of Trent: Justification, Remission of Sins, Sanctification, Interior Renewal, Faith/hope/love, Sonship, Merit]

(4) Il rinnovamento interno è fondamento ed obbligo per una vita di buone opere in cui il cristiano cerca di essere perfetto come il Padre nei cieli è perfetto e di lottare contro la *concupiscenza*, una vita di buone opere che merita la vita eterna...[Concupiscence, Pastoral Experience of Grace]

(5) Dio vuole la salvezza di tutti, (1 Tm. 2:4) ma soprattutto dei fedeli.(1 Tm. 4:10) ..[Universal Salvific Will]

(6) Perciò vuole che tutti arrivino alla conoscenza della verità rivelata nel suo Figlio... [Missions]

(7) Ma concede la grazia a tutti quelli che vivono secondo la loro coscienza, ed accoglie alla salvezza anche coloro che non conoscendolo così vivono.

I. Context and Background for Decree on Justification (Trent):

A. New Testament and the Dynamics of Grace:

1. Kingdom of God: relationship with God, divine initiative, man's response is necessary. Thus, the reality of grace is affirmed in that God seeks after men and requests from them an opening to accept his gift.

2. Paul and Romans 5:

a. On Justification:

1. OT: the just man is he who lives according to the commandments of God and thus is in just relationship with Him. God is the point of departure for man's justification.

2. NT: Christ is the Just one and it is in Him that man enters the just relationship between God and man.

b. On Faith and Baptism: one cannot speak of one without the other.

3. John: Theme is Life in Christ:

a. Jesus is the ideal man as He replaces the notion of the Kingdom of God.

b. Jesus is the source of life for men because he proceeds from the Father - man receives it both now and in the resurrection from the dead.

B. Pelagianism :

a. Pelagius: affirmed a complete freedom of man, who in his free choice of good and evil can achieve salvation by his own unaided powers. (Pelagius accepts divine help to know the good [adiutorium per doctrinam et revelationem which helps illumine man] but rejects the need of grace to do the good. Augustine says all proceeds from grace). Other consequences are:

1. human liberty consists in a lack of any compelling force towards good or evil.
2. original sin is denied.
3. Adam's sin is simply a bad example that is freely followed by his descendents.
4. Baptism of infants is unnecessary since there is no sin imputed to them.
5. Christ's redemption is confined to the forgiveness of personal sins alone.

b. Augustine: (against Julian of Eclanus)

1. Without grace, man cannot avoid sin or do the good. He needs grace to know and to do the good.

2. There are two gratuities: creation and redemption. That is, grace is received as a gift in creation and also by weakened man as forgiveness of his sins in redemption.

3. Gratia sanans suggests that human freedom is weak but truly healed by grace.

4. Prevenient Grace: from it comes faith and the ability to pray.

c. 16th Council of Carthage (418): rejected Pelagius

C. Semi-Pelagianism:

a. Semi-Pelagianism: (Monks at Cassian, etc.) held two key points:

1. Man needs grace to perform good works, but the beginning of the conversion process (faith) is man's own doing for which grace is not required ["*facultas naturalis*"]. NB: Merit precedes grace! After the foundation was laid by men, God will give him an increase in faith. [Cassian later said that there were two ways to begin the road to God: prevenient one with divine mercy and the other by one's own free will.]

2. Grace is given to all men equally; any difference between men must be ascribed to the difference in the dispositions held between men.

Point: At its start, man and God were reduced to equal partners in justification!

b. Council of Orange (529): Prevenient Grace: All Christian life begins with divine grace

Canon 3: Grace prompts man to prayer

Canon 4: Prayer for remission of sins comes from grace

Canon 5: The beginning of faith and the desire for faith come from grace

Canon 6: all that we do is initiated by God

Canon 7: All that pertains to eternal life is begun by the illumination and inspiration of the HS

D. Nominalism, Duns Scotus and Luther:

1. Duns Scotus held to two powers in God:

a. "*potentia ordinata*": what is

b. "*potentia absoluta*" what could have been (consonant with God's nature)

2. Nominalism changed "*potentia absoluta*" to refer to the principle of contradiction (It is possible for a remission of sins with their persistence since man could lack "*qualitas*").

3. Luther reversed this and said that man can be justified concerning the love of God without having the quality of grace.

E. Protestant Positions:

Catholic Position:

Preparation for Justification: all grace; no human cooperation (liberty had no role to play)

Grace is primary
Prevenient/Coop.

Grace is needed but
Human cooperation
is also needed

No sanctification or inner renewal in man after baptism

Sanctification,
Adoptive Sonship

Forgiveness is only attributed or imputed to man.

Eternal punishment
of OS and PSs are
forgiven and all
temporal pun. in
Baptism (not Pen)

Concupiscence = sin
(Luther: res digna morte aeterna)

Concup is not = to
sin (comes from and
inclines to sin)

II. The Catholic Doctrine on Justification (Trent's Decree on Justification -- sixth session, 1547)

A. Purpose of the decree:

1. Twofold purpose:

a. Positively, to give a coherent exposition of the Catholic doctrine on grace, the justification of the sinful man. It represents the first complete exposition of the sinner's justification by grace.

b. Negatively, to reject the objectionable teaching of the protestant reformers. However, the thrust of the document is not just to condemn the false position of the reformers but to offer a positive exposition (especially in the first part), basing its teaching on Scripture and Tradition.

2. Middle Road: The decree steers a middle road between Pelagian self-sufficiency and the protestant diffidence to the capabilities of man's wounded nature.

3. Addressee: It is not concerned with the justification of children through baptism and their apparent lack of cooperation in the regenerative process. Rather, it is concerned with **adults**. The entire document is built on the **conception of three-fold justification:**

- a. the moment when justification is first attained
- b. the preservation and increase of this justification
- c. the recovery of justification after it has been lost through sin.

B. Brief overview of Decree on Justification

a. Chapters 1-4: Foundation of Justification that is valid for all (Adults and Infants; for those before and after Christ)

Summary of Schema:

It gives a brief description of the story of man, creation until Christ; the importance of the death and resurrection of Christ and shows the necessity of communicating the death and resurrection of Christ in symbols. **The schema is: Death of Christ necessary that the fruits of the His death/resurrection be communicated to the individual.**

b. Chapters 5-16: Justification of Adults after Christ: Five Parts:

- 1. Chpt. 5 & 6: Preparation for Justification** (Sen. #2 in schema)
- 2. Chpt. 7 - 9: First Justification** (Justification acquired of Jesus: #3 in schema)
- 3. Chpt. 10 - 13: "Second Justification":** Augment of Justification awarded in baptism (Sen. #4 in schema)
- 4. Chpt. 14 - 15: "Third Justification":** Recovery of Justification Lost (Penance)

NB: Penance is often called the Second Justification!

- 5. Chpt. 16: Merit** (Last half of sent. #4).

C. Individual Points of Each Chapter:

1. Part One: Chpts. 1 to 4:

- a. Chapter One: Fall of all Men in Adam**

1. Justification from Original sin: It links original sin with justification not in an historical sense but in reference to its contents. It openly refers to the decree on **original sin**.

2. Description of Consequence of First Sin of Adam that remained in all: it states that through the sin of Adam, primal innocence was lost and we became “*unclean*” and “*slaves of sin*”. Thus, there is the inability of both **Gentiles** (by virtue of nature) and **Jews** (by virtue of the law) to liberate themselves.

Point: Liberty remains in a weakened, distorted state, even after baptism. Thus concupiscence must be seen linked with weak liberty.

b. Chapter Two: Redemption of all men in Christ: In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, promised from all ages, to redeem us, so that *all*, Jew and Gentile, might attain righteousness and *adoptive sonship*.

1. Universal Salvific Will: First mention of universal salvific will of God in magisterial statements.

a. Gal. 4:5: originally mentioned by Paul to include only Christians. The Fathers changed it to remove any doubt about its universality.

b. 1 Jn. 2:2: Universal salvific will is clear: First act is to realize it in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

c. Chapter Three: Communication of redemption in regeneration:

“But even though Christ died for all, still not all receive the benefit of his death, but only those to whom the merit of his passion is imparted. Just as unrighteousness comes through being born children of Adam, justification comes through rebirth in Christ Jesus.”

It is this rebirth that bestows upon them through the **merits** of the passion the **grace** by which they come just.

d. Chapter Four: A brief description justification:

a. Description: Justification = a transition [literally, “*translatio*” a transferral -- used to designate how a person is brought from one state to another] from the state in which man is born a son of the first Adam, to the state of grace and adoption as sons of God through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior.” **First Time:** Son of Adam --- passage to Son of Christ the Second Adam is used

b. Means = Baptism (actual or desire):

“After the promulgation of the Gospel, this transition does not take place without the bath of regeneration or the desire for it.”

1. Infants: cannot have a desire for baptism! Thus, if baptism of infants is possible but desire is not, what happens to unbaptized infants? condemned?

a. Idea: Post-Evangelium Promulgatum:

2. Three Theories:

a. Before Thomas: Idea of law is not enough but public promulgation is necessary to obligate.

b. When was promulgation?

1. Mt. 28: some said here
2. Death of the last apostle

c. After discovery of America: Idea of infused light of God given to all pagans (in life or at point of death) that renders a man before Christ with a decision “yes” or “no”. [NB: this is not a doctrine].

3. Trent: did not choose between these three: promulgation must be made when baptism and desire become obligatory but does not decide when. The consequence is that adults who do not choose Christ as an adult are condemned.

Key Points:

1. Relink grace/justification with Christ (Augustine: charis tou Theou)

2. Rebuffed the reformers’ idea that RCC held that either by nature or will we could achieve justification.

2. Chapters 5-6: Preparation for Justification:

A. Protestants:

1. Faith = fiducia: Trust that my sins are forgiven

RCC: Faith= believe in the truths revealed

Fiducia= after faith, trust that my sins are forgiven

2. “Sola Fidei”: excluded all works, inc. baptism

RCC: It is not a scriptural position.

B. Three Questions answered by Trent:

1. Is preparation necessary for justification?

Yes, man must do something (faith and baptism)

2. Is it only faith?

No, absolutely necessary is also votum for baptism.

What is outlined in chapter 6 is not necessary for all.

3. Are man’s acts stimulated by grace?

Yes, prevenient and cooperante grace (c. 5)

Chapter 5: Disposition for this justification in adults and its origin.

1. Origin of justification = “God’s **prevenient grace** through Jesus Christ, that is, to His call addressed to them without any previous merits of theirs.” [neither faith nor works “merits” the grace that justifies. See chapter 8 below]

(a). Grace disposes a person (**prevenient grace**) and helps a person (**cooperante grace**). **This is the same grace**, called differently due to the different functions.

2. The role of human Freedom responding to Divine Grace:

“Thus those, who through their sins were turned away from God, awakened and assisted by his grace, are disposed to turn to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace. In this way, God touches the heart of man with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, but man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he can reject it; and yet, without God’s grace, he cannot by his own free will take one step toward justice in God’s sight.”

3. Many reformers did not consider preparation possible. Luther considered justification only from above (apart from human cooperation).

Chapter 6: The manner of justification: A description of the conversion process as man’s free response to the divine initiative. Faith (inc. Hope and Love) and Baptism are essential: these dispositions are insubstitutable.

*“Adults are disposed for that justice when, awakened and assisted by divine grace, they conceive **faith from hearing** and are freely led to God, believing to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised, especially that the sinner is justified by God’s grace ‘through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus’; when understanding that they are sinners and turning from the fear of divine justice -- which gives them a salutary shock -- to the consideration of God’s mercy, they are aroused to the confident **hope** that God will be propitious to them because of Christ; when they begin to **love** God as the source of all justice and are thereby moved by a certain hatred and **detestation of sin**, that is, by that **repentance** that must be practiced before baptism; when finally they **determine to receive baptism, to begin a new life and keep the commandments.**”*

As we see, **God’s grace precedes accompanies and brings to completion, this process of preparation.** Yet, at each stage of this *translatio*, we can do something in response to that grace:

A. Faith comes from hearing: There is a certain turning to the Word and freely acknowledging the promise of salvation contained in that word. Faith is the beginning of the way that leads to Christ -- it is the foundation of the process that gives birth to the other attitudes that follow -- hope, love, repentance, confidence. Faith doesn’t make one worthy of justification; it makes one receptive to the process of justification initiated by God in Christ.

B. Fear Of Divine Justice: The Word confronts our sinfulness and we understand the punishment which our sins deserve.

C. Hope for Divine Mercy: The word arouses in us a confident **hope** in God’s mercy and forgiveness.

D. Love Of God And Hatred Of Sin: God is loved for his justice; this love inspires a repentant preparation for baptism.

E. Repentance

F. The Decision For Baptism: A life decision, keeping God’s commandments.

3. Chapters 7-9: Justification Itself:

Chapter 7: The nature and causes of the sinner’s justification.

1. Context:

A. Luther’s position:

1. Sins not really forgiven but covered/not imputed (God doesn’t look!)

2. No internal renewal in man (Sanctification comes only at end of life).

a. Further Context: MA dispute over whether infants receive grace in baptism:

1. Opinion: since grace is given for an action to so, babies in justification have sin forgiven but no grace.

2. Thomas: Both are given because grace is also that which makes one worthy of eternal life.

2. Definition of justification:

“Not the remission of sins,[alone]” but “the sanctification and renewal of the interior man through the voluntary reception of grace and of the gifts, whereby from unjust man becomes just, and from enemy a friend, that he may be an ‘heir in hope of eternal life.’”

Justification in itself :

a. Renewal of internal man (vs. Luther)

- b. Remission of sins (with Luther)**
- c. Sanctification (vs. Luther)**
- d. Suseptio donarum: man who wants to receive these gifts.**
- e. Justification that Christ merited for us given in us**
- f. Faith/hope/love**

3. Causes of justification:

Trent uses the terminology of the Scholastics but does not define it as terminology; it uses it to structure its reflections.

A. Final Cause: Glory of God and of Christ, and of eternal life.

B. Efficient Cause: God of mercy who, of his own free will, washes and sanctifies, sealing and anointing with the promised Holy Spirit.

C. Meritorious Cause: Jesus Christ, who through his **passion and death** made satisfaction for us to God.

D. Instrumental Cause: Baptism, the sacrament of faith “without which faith no one has ever been justified.”

1. Luther: Baptism does not do anything; it is faith as key (Baptism is only the expression of faith).

2. RCC: Christ uses baptism to act himself.

E. “One” Formal Cause: “The justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which he makes us just.” [Augustine’s De Trinitate, xiv, 12,15 the justice which we have as a gift from him and by which we are spiritually renewed].

“Thus, not only are we considered justice [by some imputation] but we are truly called just and are just, each one receiving within himself his own justice, according to the measure which ‘the Holy Spirit apportions to each on as He wills,’ and according to each one’s personal disposition and cooperation.”

(a) The question of formal causality is the question of what is in the person which constitutes them as justified -- what makes him just in his or her own unique way. It is a created justice that is distinct from God himself. This **created justice** is received in baptism and suffices for one to enter into eternal life if preserved without mortal sin.

1. Trent rejects “duplex justification” theory: This theory held that internal justification occurs but we need a second justification to raise us up to eternal life. Trent held to one formal cause.

a. Iustitia inharens:

b. Iustitia imputata: of righteousness of Christ to supplement the incompleteness of the righteousness that is ours and Christ’s (but ours less than his).

(b) Thus, Trent unequivocally taught the reality of the transition from unrighteousness to righteousness that occurs in justification. It denied that grace consists merely in God’s non-imputation of sin, or God’s favor. Cf. Canon 11: “If anyone says that we are justified either by the imputation of Christ’s justice alone, or by the remission of sins alone, excluding grace and charity which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and inheres in them, also that the grace that justifies us is only the favor of God, anathema sit.

(c) The process of justification has a created effect within us; it is not (as Luther held) a mere forensic justice which might lead to extrinsicism (justification comes to the sinner from without by God’s judgment, by his imputation, by his reckoning). Rather, it is the

impartation of an uncreated grace, that is the gift of the Spirit which creates a real effect in us. The interior renewal or change that takes place depends on the presence of the H. Spirit who effects a vital union with Christ.

3. *“Hence in the very act of justification, together with the remission of sins, man receives through Jesus Christ, into whom he is inserted, **the gifts faith, hope and charity, all infused at the same time.** For faith without hope and charity neither unites a man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of his body. Therefore it is rightly said, ‘faith itself, if it has no works is dead’ [James 2:17] and unprofitable, and that ‘in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love.’ [Gal. 5: 6]*

4. According to Trent, in the act of justification, man’s sins are forgiven. Man becomes just. How does this idea relate to Luther’s simul justus et peccator?

a. Luther’s position is threefold:

1. Man “total sinner-totally just” (in temporal sense)

2. “peccator in re - justified in hope”:

a. peccatum regnans (total sinner)

b. justified in hope (hope to arrive at j.)

c. ablutio peccatorum (totally just)

3. “Partial sinner (concup.) -Partially justified” (HS)

b. RCC: Not acceptable: Inclination to sin is not equal to sin.

The Decree: De Peccato Originale (fifth canon). “The holy council, however, knows and professes that concupiscence, or the inclination to sin, remains in the baptized; since it is left for us to struggle with, it cannot harm those who do not consent but manfully resist it through the grace of Jesus Christ. Of this concupiscence, which the Apostle occasionally calls “sin”, the holy Council declares: The Catholic Church has never understood that it is called sin because it would be sin in the true and proper sense in those who have been reborn, but because it comes from sin and is inclined to sin. If anyone thinks contrary, anathema sit.”).

This does not mean, that man is at the same time “just” and “sinner” in the metaphysical sense, in the sense that he is still burdened with the debt of his sinful act. What makes Luther’s formula a heresy is when it is understood either in:

(a). purely juridical nominalistic sense (declared just) which denies the real effects of forgiveness,

(b). an exaggerated eschatological sense which interprets the forgiveness of sins as a hope and not as a present reality.

Chapter 8: Justification: A gift to Believers

1. “Faith is the *beginning* of man’s salvation, the *foundation* and *root* of all justification.” By “all” justification is meant the disposition that leads to justification (the faith that comes from “hearing”), the faith that is infused within the actual conferral of justification, and the faith that underlies our growth in justification. **NB. Becker:** Trent does not decide which one!

2. “And we are said to be justified gratuitously because nothing that precedes justification, neither faith nor works, merits the grace of justification.”

Chapter 9: Faith in Remission of Sins: Against the vain confidence of Heretics:

We do believe that our sins are forgiven, gratuitously by the divine mercy of God. *“And yet, it must not be said that sins are forgiven or have been forgiven to anyone who boasts of his confidence and certainty that his sins are forgiven and who relies on this confidence alone. Moreover, it must not be asserted that those who are truly justified should unhesitatingly determine within themselves that they are justified.”* Basically, while we believe in God’s grace, *“no one can know with a certitude of faith which can not be subject to error, that he has obtained God’s grace.”* **No one knows with absolute certainty how one stands before God.** Perhaps this is the difference between faith and hope. We believe in God’s mercy and forgiveness: our hope is that we have opened ourselves sufficiently to that saving grace.

Summary of Chapters 7-9:

1. Justification as an internal renewal and not just imputed, etc.

2. “Per fidem” = beginning of salvation; “gratis” = justification is given gratuitously.

3. Fides accepts revelation as is and as given to all; fiducia is trust that my sins are forgiven.

4. Growth of Justification: The preservation and increase of grace (Chapters 10-13) -

Chapter 10: -Christians grow in justification with collaboration of faith and good works with grace: The council sets forth the Scriptural testimony concerning the growth in strength in the members of God’s household. *“When ‘faith is active along with works’ [James 2:22], they increase in the very justice they have received through the grace of Christ, and are further justified.”* The reformers who held that justification is the same in every man since it is nothing else than the pronouncement of righteousness. Trent said that **although justice is the same in essence, it differs in individuals in grades of intensity** and can even grow to greater intensity in each person. Depending upon a person’s receptivity, our participation in Christ is realized in different degrees.

Chapter 11: The observance of the commandments: Its necessity and possibility: Grace gives force to do it.

a. The following chapter deals with several issues of the reformation which might, collectively be called **antinomian**:

(1) The reformers maintained that justification is a single once-and-for all process. Therefore, those who are justified need not do anything to further growth in justification. Commandments are useless. To this, the document declares that justification is an ongoing process and that even the just need to grow in the grace of justification.

(2) The reformers maintained that freedom is so wounded that we are always sinning, even venially when we do works. (A corollary to this is that we are sinning when we look to be rewarded as a result of our works). Commandments are impossible. The council responds that, with God’s help, we can in fact obey the commands, for God does not command the impossible.

b. The text: *“No one, however much he be justified, should consider himself exempt from the observance of the commandments; and no one should say that the observance of God’s commandments is impossible...For God does not command the impossible. . . For, although in this mortal life men, however just and holy they may be, fall sometimes at least into those slight and daily sins they call venial, they do not, on that account cease to be just...”*

Hence, the just themselves should feel all the more obliged to walk in the way of justice.... Therefore, nobody should flatter himself with faith alone thinking that by faith alone he will be an heir and obtain the inheritance... Hence it is clear that those are opposed to the orthodox doctrine of religion who maintain that the just man sins at least venially in every good work, or...that he merits eternal punishment. They too are opposed to it who assert that the just sin in all their works if in those works... they look for an eternal reward.”

Chapter 12: Rash Presumption of one’s own predestination must be avoided.

“For without special revelation it is impossible to know whom God has chosen for Himself.”

Chapter 13: The gift of perseverance (a corollary to presumption concerning one’s predestination):

“Let no one promise himself any security about this gift with absolute certitude, although all should place their firmest hope in God’s help.” Our hope is that God who began this good work will bring it to completion. Within this hope, man must “work out his salvation with fear and trembling’ [Phil 2.12], in labors, in vigils, in almsgiving, in prayers and offerings, in fastings and chastity.”

Summary of Chapters 10-13:

1. **Justification is not the same for all.**
2. **“The Protestant idea of “simul iustus et peccator” is unacceptable.**
3. **Eternal life does not come solely from faith but from faith and good works.**

5. The possibility of recovering justification (Chapters 14 & 15):

Chapter 14: Those who sin after justification and their restoration to grace.

a. “Those who through sin have forfeited the grace of justification they have received, can be justified again when, awakened by God, they make the effort to regain through the **sacrament of penance** and by the merits of Christ the grace they have lost.”

b. **“the repentance of a Christian after his fall into sin differs vastly from repentance at the time of baptism.”**

This repentance includes not only contrition, but sacramental confession [or at least the desire for it -- Trent again holds the opinion that perfect contrition, coupled with a desire for the sacrament, leads to the forgiveness of sins] and the performance of penances. Unlike baptism, where all the temporal punishment of sins forgiven is remitted, it is not the case in penance.

Chapter 15: By every mortal sin Grace is lost, but not faith:

a. The position of the reformers on this issue:

(1) **Calvin:** Those predestined for eternal happiness could no longer sin if one did sin after his conversion, it was a sign that he wasn’t really justified). Once justified, you are justified.

(2) **Luther:** The state of justice is lost only when faith is abandoned.

(3) **Molinos:** There is a permanent state of love wherein man can no longer commit serious sin.

b. **Trent’s affirmation:** The state of justification itself is lost through mortal sin -- however there are some mortal sins that do not involve a loss of faith. “The grace of justification, once received, is lost not only by unbelief which causes the loss of faith itself [as Luther claimed] but also by any other mortal sin, even though faith is not lost.

6. Fruit of Justification: Merit

Chapter 16 -- “The Merit of good works: Merit as a grace and a reward

1. Our good works merit eternal life with grace and with our activity.

“For Jesus Christ Himself continuously infuses strength into the justified...; this strength always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works which, without it, could in no way be pleasing to God and meritorious. Therefore, we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified for them to be regarded as having entirely fulfilled the divine Law in their present condition by the works they have done in the sight of God; they can also be regarded as having truly merited eternal life, which they will obtain in due time provided they die in the state of grace... Thus, is neither our justice considered as coming from us, nor is God’s justice disregarded or denied; for the justice which is said to be ours because we become just by its inherence in us is that of God himself, since its infused in us by God through the merit of Christ.”

2. Protestant-Catholic Dispute:

A. Protestant characterization of RC position:

1. Good works earn justification and eternal life
2. They exclude Christ and faith
3. They take the place of God’s judgment

B. Theological Opinion: “meritum de congruo”

This, given by God for works of man, helps man to receive eternal life. Problem: doesn’t this depend upon human actions? Trent: rejects meritum de congruo.

C. Protestant Position:

1. Good works don’t deserve eternal life but terrestrial goods and “gradus praemiorum” for eternal life.
2. Eternal life is “debito” because God promised it to us.
3. Good works are acceptable to God because they are the works of believers.

D. RCC response to Protestant positions:

1. Good works do merit eternal life but “praemia” idea is acceptable.
2. Eternal life is debit as promise but also “propter merita” is OK.
3. Good works are acceptable on basis of faith and not just that.

3. Is there a contradiction between good works and grace?

a. Greek Fathers: question of merit is dealt with it 2 ways:

1. Image of battle: recompense
2. Why? two ways to see it:
 - a. kat’ axiav: acc. to value
 - b. kata xapiv: acc. to grace

b. Augustine: three principles:

1. our works = merit
2. gratia prevenient allows for good works
3. God is “debitor” inasmuch as He promised eternal life to us

c. Becker: no contradiction between grace and human free cooperation:

1. Necessity of God to recognize and love his image (found in man)

2. Divine Decision to forgive sins and render possible the positive valuation of man's internal life

3. Amicitia: freely gratuitous gift of grace that elevates man to the supernatural plane. Man acts within this sphere in freedom.

4. Comments:

a. Everlasting life is a gift as well as a reward.

b. Jesus Christ exerts a continued influence on the life of the just as the head of the members, as the vine nourishing the branches. It is Christ's power -- it is our cooperation. In Christ, then, we can say that we merit everlasting life -- these good works, and the merit they achieve are the fruits of justification.

c. Merit is founded upon the grace of God. Man can produce acts deserving of salvation because God produces them in him. Luther of course denied that man can merit anything by his works.

Concluding canons on justification with their anathemas.

a. The first three stress the need for grace in the life of the Christian, drawing upon the anti-Pelagian tradition of the Church.

b. The next three stress the importance of the human will in cooperating in the life of Christ.

c. We are not saved by faith alone.

d. Justice is not merely imputed.

e. Justifying faith is not just fiducia.

f. We do not know with absolute certainty our predestination to glory.

g. The commandments are not impossible to observe.

h. The justified can lose grace through sin and there are mortal sins other than unbelief.

i. Good works are not just merely the signs of justification but are also the means by which we grow in justice.

j. The justified man does not sin when he performs good works with a view to an eternal reward.

II. Trent's Decree on Original Sin (Session V, June 1546)

A. Background:

Four fundamental Protestant theses:

a. After Baptism, "peccatum" remains in man.

b. This is a "res digna morte aeternum"

c. The remnant of sin impedes man from eternal life

d. This sin is concupiscence

B. Overall Structure:

The Decree on Original Sin is divided into five canons, with corresponding anathemas. The schema is as follows:

1. Canon One: Adam lost holiness and justice in Fall, incurred death, is under captivity of the devil and was changed in body and soul for the worse.

2. Canon Two: Adam's sin damaged all his descendants, the damage which extends both to body and soul.

3. Canon Three: It cannot be removed by natural powers but only by the merit of Jesus' passion and death and it can be applied to both infants and adults.

4. Canon four: Infants must be baptized, even if they have baptized parents, because they have original sin.

5. Canon five: Two parts, each with anathemas:

A. Part One: Two prassi:

1. Baptismal grace cancels the reality of original sin. (this is in common with Luther)

2. All else that belongs to the true essence of sin is cancelled. This is against Luther's idea of "res digna morte aeterna". Trent rejects this later Lutheran idea.

B. Part Two: Concupiscence

1. Section One: SS citations regarding concupiscence (understand these references in regard to sin above). Since sin must lead to eternal death, there is no sin in the baptized. Concupiscence is not a sin.

2. Section Two: Objections refuted. Luther held that concupiscence was a sin, even after baptism. (Augustine also called it a sin). However, it is really an inclination to sin, born out of the consequences of sin. (In this sense, Trent cites Augustine against Luther).

Summary:

a. concupiscence remains after baptism

b. There is the need to fight against concupiscence; this fight will not amage the person.

c. It is not as "true sin" (definition of Luther) but in an "analogous sense" it can be so called because it comes from sin and leads one to sin.

III. Post-Tridentine Theology of Grace:

A. First Thesis:

1."Dio Trino abita in noi": Theme of Inhabitation

NB: Justification= created grace

-remission of sins

-internal renewal (sanctification)

Inhabitation of the Trinity= uncreated grace.

a. Paul: 1 Cor. 3:6; 2 Cor. 6: Here Paul uses two images from the Old Testament: the temple of God and to live amidst his people and applies them to individual Christians and the Church. The temple of God: Both for individuals and the Church, insofar as God allows in them growth and maturity in the life of holiness. In this sense, the temple of God is to live and work in the Holy Spirit.

b. John: Jn. 14; 1,2,3 Jn.: John cancels the OT notion of temple. The image is of God inhabiting within us. The Holy Spirit **remains** in us after the love of the Father and the Son.

(1) This is an immanent, mutual and reciprocal love.

(2) Point: The HS comes and is felt and makes known the Father and the Son in us.

c. Summary of Doctrine:

Sanctification = Inhabitation of the Trinity

[SS: Divine Presence = active, dynamic]

1. In Baptism, we receive grace as a participation of the life of the Triune God. (St. Thomas spoke of the appropriation of the persons of the Trinity). Not nec. just or esp. the Holy Spirit.

2. Inhabitation of the Spirit: Testimony of the Father and the Son. We have proprium of each person.

3. Friendship between God and us: Perfect friendship needs the presence of all three divine persons in man. Christian life is a living together with the Triune God.

Augustine: Two presences of God:

a. ex creatione: to all according to the level of being.

b. ex gratia: in the heart of the just:

Trinity is subject; HS is given special attribution

2. “una partecipazione Christiforme”: Grace as participation in the life of the Trinity by the nature of its Christiform nature.

a. SS: Jn 5: 26-29, within 16-30.

1. How is this possible since divine nature cannot die and rise?

2. Response:

a. Our grace is a participation in the grace of Christ. That is, we receive grace from Christ; from his human life, Christ as the Incarnation. This explains the importance of his death and resurrection.

b. Every encounter with the Trinity occurs in Christ: (both Beatific Vision and the Inhabitation of the Trinity).

b. Becker: Gives a threefold schema:

1. God creator of nature: Man is made in his image (of God) capable to receive divine life.

2. God creator of grace: creates man in the image of the Triune God= Christiforme (appropriated to the HS). **Baptism.**

3. Inhabitation of the HS: perfection of anterior inhabitation (HS as proprium)- **Confirmation.**

B. Second Thesis: Preparation/Participation in Justification and Infants:

a. Luke 15: Story of the Prodigal Son:

Four images:

1. Asks: Son wishes to be free of His father when he should be free for the Father

2. Exits:

3. Returns:

4. Encounter with the Father and feast: he returns to be under the authority of the Father/Lord.

b. Two key questions:

1. What dispositions do Infants have in baptism? Chapter 7 refers to adults but illumination for babies:

a. Threefold distinction:

1. Justification offered

2. Justification given
3. Justification received: can come before or after

b. Key Difference:

Adults: Justification: Given and Accepted

Infants: Justification sola Given****

***With the **finality** to be accepted later in life. Thus, the disposition is crucial even with infants.

2. Question of adults in crisis of faith: received but not accolta without operante faith.

a. Broaden notion of faith:

1. Trent: Faith = accepting intel. propositions

2. Now: faith = acceptance of the event of Christ (facts, promises, attitudes and his significance). A person must found himself upon Christ, accepting His message, following Him and loving Him.

b. Unity of Act of Faith: Intellectual Faith is key but so also is the personal act of faith. Thus, intellect leads to personal and personal must include intellectual faith.

C. Third Thesis: Nature of Justification:

A. Remission of Sins:

1. Unity of Two elements:

a. Act of God that forgives an offense that is so generous that he gives a gift- he forgives even deformity after the sin.

b. The grace itself

Point: All justification must be seen as an encounter with person (God)

B. Sanctification:

1. Gratia elevans: 1 Cor. 6:15: (Paul) In justification, we are also sanctified by the work of God in man.

2. Gratia Sanans: Renewal: heals the deformities of man: elevates us to be able to be friends of God.

3. Faith, Hope and Love: Christological virtues in the SS and theological virtues in the Tradition. They introduce us into dialogue with God because they turn us to God. NB: Modern problem with justification: It has come to mean vindication a person wins for himself when wronged. Now we need to see justification in victory over sin; God as operative and man as cooperative.

C. Sonship:

Overview:

a. OT: Future Day of Yahweh, we become sons of God

b. NT: Shift: Our sonship is a participation in Divine Sonship of the Christ.

To understand who we are as sons, look to the Son and see us in Him!

1. In Paul: Christians are called “sons” or “children”:

a. Adoption: relationship with God. In this sense, it is a legal action (an already existing person receives a new relationship with another - in this case, the Father. However, the context is the Pauline idea of “new creation”).

2. In John: Only huiois is Jesus, tekna is an expression for us.

a. Generation and birth:

b. In reference to Christ (same and different with him)

c. In reference to Trinity (Father gives life to Son and to us in the HS)

3. Summary:

a. We must hold together two ideas:

(1). **God freely chooses to adopt us**

(2). **Such adoption gives us new life.**

b. Comparison with Christ:

Christ as God was Son by nature

Christ as man is Son “ex unione” and so in this sense the “natural

Son”

Christians as sons are by grace

Their life is based on justification and the fight against

concupiscence.

D. Fourth Thesis: Concupiscence:

1. Three Questions from Trent: which taught that we can overcome concupiscence and its effects!

a. What is concupiscence?

It is an inclination to evil (both spiritual and physical) that remains after justification and baptism (it exists before and after man’s freedom)

b. From where does it come?

1. Original sin (ans. what is it and from where)

2. Personal sins

3. “heredity”

4. Environment

c. Why does it remain? Need for human participation

1. Person forgets the presence of benevolence and love of God: knowledge allows for action.

2. Person does not see the need to have others help.

2. Further Reflections:

a. Pastoral Experience: Key is grace.

a. Force to live as Christ - must know him

b. Force of divine life - greater than concupiscence

c. Personal Attitude of God towards me continues; pastorally, we must help people see that God loves them.

d. Grace: has an individual and social dimension: Grace must also be seen insociatal context.

b. Human Activity:

a. Fight against concupiscence=fight against ourselves

Why? liberty brings in se concupiscence

b. Individual man, to recognize fully his defects and overcome them necessitates another.

c. Individual/social aspect of human nature: I discover my capacity/worth only in the encounter with others.

E. Fifth Thesis: Universal Salvific Will

A. Scriptural Evidence:

1. OT:

a. Covenant with Noah (Gn. 8:20-9:17) is with all

b. Vocation of Abraham : is father of many

c. The promise to the patriarchs is concerns all

d. Prophets: covenant with YHWH extends to all

NB: “Many” means all

2. NT:

a. Last Supper texts: “many” meaning “all”

b. Texts on Service:

Mk. 10:44-45: “servant for all”

Mt. 20:27-28: “give life for many”

Rms. 5:12, etc: Organic unity implied between 1 & 2 Adam

Col. 1:18-20: Son is head of all: God revealed all his salvific power in the Son and through the Son has given the cosmos restoration.

1 Jn. 1:2: “He is expiation for sins of the world”

c. Key texts re: God and Christ:

2 Cor. 5:19: “God reconciled the world in JC”

Rm 5:15: “grace given to all men.”

***2 Pt. 3:9:** “God does not wish any to perish but all have a way to repent.”

***1 Tm. 2:4:** “God wants that all be saved and arrive at the knowledge of the truth.” Key: Foundation: salvific will; How: prayer for all and preaching to all

***1Tm. 4:10:** “above all, believers.”

d. Summary: Salvific grace is made visible in Jesus and in the period between His two comings it educates us to live correctly our relationship between our neighbor and God.

B. Tradition:

1. Before Nicea: “For our salvation”

2. After Nicea:

a. Greek Fathers: universal sal. will and man’s sins

1. Chrysostom:

a. First Salvific will: “anterior” agape of God that wishes to save all men.

b. Second will: specific; supposes presence or absence of virtue and saves those who have it.

2. John Damascene:

a. Antecedent Salvific will: all be saved

b. Consequent Salvific will: founded upon the actions of man

b. Latin Fathers: universal sal. will and grace

1. Augustine: seems to limit USW.

a. adiutorium: required for all good acts

b. adiutorium: grace that infallibly achieves its goal. This

is only given to some and not all.

3. Middle Ages: immutability of salvific will

PT: reaffirm that no one is condemned without proper sins and limitation is denied.

a. Thomas:

1. voluntas antecedens vs. voluntas simpliciter

2. “ex parte hominis absolute considerati” vs. “ex parte volitorum” (man in action)

4. Reformation:

a. Luther: Deus praedicatus (Verbum Dei; Logos) vs. Deus absconditus (Deus Ipse). The second does not wish to save all.

b. Calvin: God wishes to save only those who accept His message.

c. Trent: USW: canon 2

5. Modern Magisterial Teachings:

a. Pius IX:

1. no condemnation without personal proper sins

2. Invincible ignorance of necessity of faith and RCC can attain salvation if they follow the natural law with grace.

3. EENS: is valid

b. Pius XII: implicit votum to belong to the RCC

c. Vatican II: NA 4, 12, 7; LG 3, 13, 14-16, UR 3, GS 22. The council taught three means: grace, faith and Church, with the last being universally necessary, while the last two are not absolutely indispensable for those in invincible ignorance.

F. Sixth Thesis: The Necessity of the Missions

1. Root:

Foundation of the Mission is and can only be the will of Christ to establish the missions: Mt. 28; LG 17; 1 Tim. 2:4.

2. Reasons why:

a. To know grace allows one to act differently (after the illumination of the mind)

b. Communal Aspect: Church

c. The action of the HS moves us to a mission. Even if the HS works in the actions of the non-believer, He moves us to complete the work He is doing.

d. Scope: We are to share our privilege of being Christians. The Mission is the greatest form of fraternal love.

3. Further Reflections;

a. Christ:

1. God wished to reveal Himself in human way: revelation and redemption is limited by the conditions of being human (space, time, etc. and the need for his hearers to be ready)

2. In the Incarnation, the way of revelation and redemption is elevated to overcome the limitations of humanity.

b. Christians: Salvation is an offer that implies freedom and responsibility. It is part of the mystery of redemption that universal salvific will is enacted through human freedom.

G. Seventh Thesis: Salvation of those who do not know Christ:

1. Theme: He who knows neither God or Jesus but lives according to conscience (what he sees is right and just) with the grace of Christ can come to salvation (LG 16, GS 22-25).

a. Holy Spirit puts non-Christians in contact with the Paschal Mystery in a way known only by God.

2. Problem: How do you hold together 6 and 7? Why do you need the missions (LG 14b)

a. **Answer:** Christians have special grace; mission is a permanent part of Christ's will. It flows from the love of neighbor.